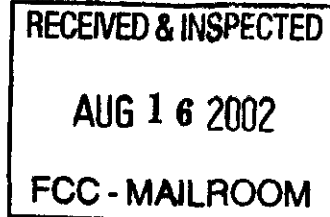


Marlene H. Dortch
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
445 12th Street SW, TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554



Re: Ultratec's Petition on CapTel-docket 98-67

As a Deaf professional, I would like to send my comments supporting Ultratec's petition to the FCC to provide CapTel as an enhancement to the existing VCO relay services. As a youngster with a progressive hearing loss, I used the telephone in the normal way up until my late teens. By 1970, deafness immediately imposed tremendous barriers with regard to telephone use.

In 1990, I was able to access the telephone again using VCO relay services. With the tremendous strides we have made in speech to text technology, the current VCO relay service approved by the FCC is now obsolete for VCO users. It is very time consuming and forces individuals like myself who are profoundly deaf but can speak, to labor through phone calls appearing far more disabled to our telephone contacts than necessary.

Current VCO technology also limits individuals who have some functional hearing. As a teacher of the deaf in public schools, I have many hard of hearing students who would like to use their residual hearing over the telephone, but VCO relay does not afford them this option without two lines and conference calling capabilities (2LVCO). The CapTel technology offered by Ultratec allows hard of hearing individuals to use their own speech and hearing while using the text as support when they miss words or phrases. CapTel technology is so transparent, deaf/head of hearing users seem to be placing calls independently. Additionally, the speed of CapTel is phenomenal and allows us to conduct calls efficiently.

My mother and father are in their 70's and are eager to get CapTel. They are hard of hearing now and the relay is much too cumbersome for them. Efficient telephone access is particularly important for the health and safety of our senior citizens.

I encourage the FCC to approve the Ultratec petition to provide CapTel service for the many Americans who are deaf but can speak or who are hard of hearing. Please do not force us to wait needlessly. It's time to rally behind President Bush's New Freedom Initiative by allowing Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans to use telephone technology that is one the cutting edge.

Sincerely,

Susan Dickinson

Teacher of the Deaf Douglas County Schools
Member of the Gallaudet University Board of Trustees
Chair of the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
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